

Appl. No.: 10/605,383
Amdt. Dated: 2/20/2006
Reply to Office action of: 12/16/2005

AMENDMENTS TO THE DRAWINGS:

No amendments to the drawings are presented herewith.

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REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

There are no amendments to the specification and drawings entered herewith.

Claims 1 – 18 remain in this application. Claims 1 and 10 have been amended to define more correctly Applicants' claimed invention. Support for these amendments to Claims 1 and 10 may be found, for example, in Figures 1 and 2 as well as paragraphs [0010], [0016], and [0020].

Claims 1 – 5 and 10 – 14 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by Inaba (US Patent 6,227,500). Specifically, the Examiner states:

With respect to claim 1, Inaba teaches a snap-in cluster attachment (Fig. 1) for attaching the lower edge of a cluster housing to an IP retainer comprising: a) at least one attachment member (Fig. 1, element 23) fixedly attached to the lower edge of the cluster housing (Fig. 1, element 20), said attachment member comprising a body having two end (Fig. 2, element 23 the bottom and the top) and two sides (Fig. 2, element 23 the sides that lead up to the bottom of the housing) wherein one end is attached to the lower edge of the cluster housing and the other end terminates in a mounting pin (Fig. 1, element 23) oriented perpendicular to the sides of the attachment member; and b) at least one corresponding opening (fig. 3, opening element 16) in the IP retainer having mounting pin retaining members (Fig. 3, elements 16 vertical side walls) disposed therein for receiving and holding the mounting pin of the at least one attachment member; thereby providing for attaching the cluster housing lower edge to the IP retainer by snapping the at least one mounting pin on the lower edge of the cluster housing into place in the corresponding at least one IP retainer opening having mounting pin retaining members located therein.

With respect to claim 2 and with all the limitations of claim 1, Inaba teaches that said snap-in cluster attachments allow the cluster housing to be rolled upward (Figs. 3, 4, 5 and 6) for fixedly attaching the cluster housing by its top edge to the IP retainer.

With respect to claim 3 and with all the limitations of claim 1, Inaba teaches that said at least one attachment member and at least one corresponding opening comprises

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2 or more attachment members and 2 or more corresponding openings (Fig. 2, elements 23 and corresponding openings 16).

With respect to claim 4 and with all the limitations of claim 1, Inaba teaches said attachment members are molded as an integral part (Fig. 1) of the cluster housing.

With respect to claim 5 and with all the limitations of claim 1, Inaba teaches said openings in the IP retainer having mounting pin retaining members disposed within are molded as an integral part (Fig. 1) of said IP retainer.

With respect to claim 10 Inaba teaches a snap-in cluster attachment for attaching the lower edge of an instrument cluster housing to an IP retainer comprising: a) at least one attachment member (Fig. 1, element 23) fixedly attached to the lower edge of the instrument cluster housing (Fig. 1, element 20), said attachment member comprising a body having two ends (Fig. 2, element 23 the bottom and the top) and two sides (Fig. 2, element 23 the sides that lead up to the bottom of the housing) wherein one end is attached to the lower edge of the instrument cluster housing and the other end terminates in a mounting pin (Fig. 1, element 23) oriented perpendicular to the sides of the attachment member; and b) at least one corresponding opening (fig. 3, opening element 16) in the IP retainer having mounting pin retaining members (Fig. 3, elements 16 vertical side walls) disposed therein for receiving and holding the mounting pin of the at least one attachment member, thereby providing for attaching the instrument cluster housing lower edge to the IP retainer by snapping the at least one mounting pin on the lower edge of the instrument cluster housing into place in the corresponding at least one IP retainer opening having mounting pin retaining members located therein.

With respect to claim 11 and with all the limitations of claim 10, Inaba teaches that said snap-in cluster attachments allow the instrument cluster housing to be rolled upward (Figs. 3, 4, 5 and 6) for fixedly attaching the instrument cluster housing by its top edge to the IP retainer.

With respect to claim 12 and with all the limitations of claim 10, Inaba teaches that said at least one attachment member and at least one corresponding opening comprises 2 or more attachment members and 2 or more

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corresponding openings (Fig. 2, elements 23 and corresponding openings 16).

With respect to claim 13 and with all the limitations of claim 10, Inaba teaches said attachment members are molded as an integral part (Fig. 1) of the instrument cluster housing.

With respect to claim 14 and with all the limitations of claim 10, Inaba teaches said openings in the IP retainer having mounting pin retaining members disposed therein are molded as an integral part (Fig. 1) of said IP retainer.

Applicant respectfully traverses these rejections. The key to Applicants' invention is the ability to snap the cluster housing or instrument cluster housing into the IP opening and secure it there such that it is retained in said IP opening before the housing top edge is fixedly secured to said IP opening. Further the claimed invention provides the ability to align the housing in the IP opening without the need for the IP opening to have sidewalls with alignment guide channels and the cluster housing having corresponding guides. Applicants' claimed invention eliminates these two critical elements and also allows for the electrical connection at the back of said housing to be carried out before final positioning and securing within the IP opening eliminating the need for special electrical connector mating structures, as well as eliminating the need for the critical element of a rear lower surface within the IP retainer opening.

A fair reading of Inaba reference discloses an electrical cluster housing having at least one rotation shaft which is placed, but not snap fit, into a corresponding support groove and which requires at least one guide on each side of said cluster housing to mate with at least one corresponding alignment guide channel in side walls to the IP housing opening to align the cluster housing during positioning of said cluster housing for fixed attachment of said cluster housing upper edge in said IP housing opening. Furthermore, because the support groove does not hold the cluster housing any electrical connections at the back of the cluster housing must be self-mating because the cluster housing must be in final position before it is secured in the IP opening. Furthermore, having the support groove located at the rear of the IP retainer opening prevents the Inaba reference from teaching or suggesting the connection of plugs or other devices to the back of the cluster housing outside of the IP retainer after the cluster housing is mounted by its bottom edge but before it is rotated into final position within the IP retainer opening. Additionally, the requirement of the support channel being located at the rear of the IP retainer opening

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requires that the IP opening have a bottom surface to locate said support channel within whereas Applicants' claimed invention does not require this critical element. The dependent claims depending on clearly allowable independent claims are therefore also allowable. Clearly, when viewed in this light the Inaba et al. reference does not disclose, teach, or suggest Applicants' claimed invention.

Claims 6, 7, 15, and 16 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Inaba. Specifically, the Examiner states:

With respect to claims 6, 7, and 15, 16 with all the limitations of claims 1 and 10 respectively, Inaba teaches all of the limitations of the claims including the mounting pin members and the pin retaining members but does not teach the specific dimensions of the mounting pin and pin retaining members. Hinge line mounting pins and retaining members are well known in the art, the diameter size of the mounting pin and the wall thickness of the retaining members range in values from very small to very large depending on their particular use, in fact look at a pair of glasses, a door, and a jewelry box and you will see a variety of sizes. It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to make the diameter of the mounting pin and the wall thickness of the retaining member any size, including making the diameter of the mounting pin between 2.0mm and 10.0mm and making the wall thickness of the mounting pin retaining member between 1.0mm and 5.0mm, in order to fulfill particular design needs depending on the specifics of the structure. Furthermore it has been held that where the general conditions of a claim are disclosed in the prior art, discovering the optimum or workable ranges involves only routine skill in the art. *In re Aller*, 105 USPQ 233.

With respect to claims 8, 9 and 17, 18 with all limitations of claims 1 and 10 respectively, Inaba teaches all of the limitations of the claims including a cluster housing, attachment member, IP retainer and mounting pin retaining member but does not teach the particular material used to make these elements. There are many known materials used to make cluster housings and attachment members as well as IP retainers and mounting pin retaining members, materials such as various metals and plastics have long been known to be used in the art and particular

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material choices are made depending on the needed properties for the specific conditions of use. It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to make the cluster housing, attachment member, IP retainer and mounting pin retaining member, taught by Inaba, of any appropriate material including making the cluster housing and attachment member of styrene and the IP retainer and mounting pin retainer element in order to meet specific needed properties. Furthermore it has been held that to be within the general skill of a worker in the art to select a known material on the basis of its suitability for the intended use as a matter of obvious design choice. *In re Leshin*, 125 USPQ 416.

Applicant respectfully traverses these rejections. The key to Applicants' invention, as described above, is the ability to snap the cluster housing or instrument cluster housing into the IP opening and secure it there such that it is retained in said IP opening before the housing top edge is fixedly secured to said IP opening. Further the claimed invention provides the ability to align the housing in the IP opening without the need for the IP opening to have sidewalls with alignment guide channels and the cluster housing having corresponding guides. Applicants' claimed invention eliminates these two critical elements and also allows for the electrical connection at the back of said housing to be carried out before final positioning and securing within the IP opening eliminating the need for special electrical connector mating structures.

A fair reading of Inaba reference, as described above, discloses an electrical cluster housing having at least one rotation shaft which is placed, but not snap fit, into a corresponding support groove and which requires at least one guide on each side of said cluster housing to mate with at least one corresponding alignment guide channel in side walls to the IP housing opening to align the cluster housing during positioning of said cluster housing for fixed attachment of said cluster housing upper edge in said IP housing opening. Furthermore, because the support groove does not hold the cluster housing any electrical connections at the back of the cluster housing must be self-mating because the cluster housing must be in final position before it is secured in the IP opening. Furthermore, having the support groove located at the rear of the IP retainer opening prevents the Inaba reference from teaching or suggesting the connection of plugs or other devices to the back of the cluster housing outside of the IP retainer after the cluster housing is mounted by its bottom edge but before it is rotated into final position within

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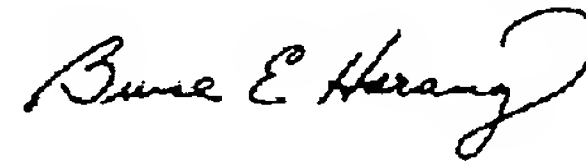
the IP retainer opening. Additionally, the requirement of the support channel being located at the rear of the IP retainer opening requires that the IP opening have a bottom surface to locate said support channel within whereas Applicants' claimed invention does not require this critical element. The dependent claims depending on clearly allowable independent claims are therefore also allowable. Clearly, when viewed in this light the Inaba et al. reference does not disclose, teach, or suggest Applicants' claimed invention.

Applicants acknowledge the prior art made of reference by the Examiner but not used as a basis of rejection. Because this art was not the basis of rejection Applicants make no further comment about said art.

In light of Applicants' continuing obligation under Rule 56, a supplemental IDS form and copies of the cited references are submitted herewith. Applicants have no English translations of any foreign language references included herewith.

In view of the remarks herein, and the amendments hereto, it is submitted that this application is in condition for allowance, and such action and issuance of a timely Notice of Allowance is respectfully solicited.

Respectfully submitted,



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Attachments